

Writing Strong Resume Bullet Points: Retail and Food Service Industries

Turn experiences into impact using the SAR method

What do employers look for in these industries?

Effective resumes in these industries highlight measurable results such as improved customer satisfaction, increased sales, reduced wait times, or enhanced operational efficiency. Overall, this handout will help you write strong accomplishment statements for roles in retail and food service.

Tip: Remember to [customize your resume](#) by incorporating keywords from the job description. For additional guidance on formatting and structure, review our [Resume/CV templates](#).

SAR Method: Core Framework

- ✓ Your resume must contain concise bullet points to describe your experiences
- ✓ SAR statements effectively outline your accomplishments in a simple, informative way

What is SAR?

S = Situation: What was the context? (e.g., problems you encountered or tasks you took on)

A = Action: What did you specifically do? (e.g., use a strong past-tense [action verb](#))

R = Result: What changed because of your actions? (e.g., improvements or outcomes)

Note: When formatting a resume bullet point, the sequence should be Action + Situation + Result. Also, try to incorporate numbers, percentages, or dollar amounts to further demonstrate your impact.

A weak example for a summer retail associate could be:

- Helped customers and completed cashier duties at a busy retail store

A strong example for a summer retail associate using the SAR method could be:

- Assisted 100 customers per shift with camping equipment selection and purchases, contributing to a 10% increase in promotional item sales during a seasonal campaign

How the SAR Method was implemented:

ACTION: Assisted

SITUATION: 100 customers per shift with camping equipment selection and purchases,

RESULT: contributing to a 10% increase in promotional item sales during a seasonal campaign

Note: This statement includes industry-specific context and skills, clearly communicates the result or intent of the action, and incorporates numbers to strengthen its impact.

Tip: For current students, review the [Carleton Career Competencies](#) to identify the knowledge, skills, and attributes developed through your academic journey. These reflections can help articulate your employability and write stronger SAR statements.



Impact Levels: Early Experience vs Advanced Experience

This section will help you brainstorm the context of your work (Situation) and the impact of your contributions (Result), with sample examples tailored to your level of experience.

Early Experience (e.g., co-ops, placements, internships, projects, clubs, and entry-level roles)

Considerations for the Situation	Questions to Help Frame the Result
• Carleton Career Competencies (e.g., Communication, Community Engagement, or Professionalism & Work Ethic) • Customer-facing tasks (e.g., sales, food prep, returns, merchandising, drive-thru) • Tools, procedures, or certifications (e.g., POS systems, WHMIS, Smart Serve)	• How did customers benefit? (e.g., needs accommodated, concerns resolved, positive experiences) • What business impact did your work have? (e.g., sales generated, repeat visits) • What skills did you strengthen? (e.g., cash handling, upselling, teamwork)

Food Counter Attendant on Campus: Processed 150 meal transactions per shift during peak periods while accommodating dietary needs to ensure an inclusive dining experience

Campus Bookstore Sales Rep: Collaborated with 8 team members to assist 120 students daily with textbook selections and returns, reducing delays in accessing required materials

Advanced Experience (e.g., professional experience and leadership roles)

Considerations for the Situation	Questions to Help Frame the Result
• Business data informing decisions (e.g., sales reports, labour budgets, inventory trends, POS analytics) • Operational challenges (e.g., complaints, staffing shortages, inventory discrepancies) • Leadership scope (e.g., shift assignments, vendor coordination, multiple locations)	• How did the customer experience improve? (e.g., greater accessibility, personalized recommendations) • What business targets were met? (e.g., food sales surpassed, shrinkage reduced) • What team outcomes emerged? (e.g., stronger retention, increased productivity)

Restaurant Assistant Manager: Leveraged menu purchase trends to promote seasonal entrées and limited-time desserts, exceeding Q3 sales targets by 12%

Grocery Store Supervisor: Addressed inventory discrepancies through routine audits and stock controls, reducing shrinkage by 15% across grocery, produce, and dairy departments

Other ways to show impact if you do not know exact numbers

- **Scope** (e.g., approximate # of transactions, products, shoppers): Fulfilled 150+ drive-thru orders per shift, maintaining accurate service during peak hours
- **Scale** (e.g., approximate size of team, department): Supervised 15+ staff across grocery and checkout, supporting retention through ongoing coaching and recognition
- **Quality Improvements** (e.g., increased accessibility, efficiency, inclusivity): Organized accessible merchandise displays, improving navigation for customers using mobility aids

Tip: Begin [tracking data](#) to incorporate stronger metrics into future SAR statements.